FILE: CTF 140

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER
MANNED SPACECRAFT RECOVERY FORCE, ATLANTIC
TASK FORCE ONE FOUR ZERO
NAVAL AIR STATION
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA 23511

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From: Commander Manned Spacecraft Recovery Force, Atlantic
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

Subj: Command History (OPNAV Report 5750.12); forwarding of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12

Encl: (1) Basic Narrative
(2) Photograph of RADM T. A. CHRISTOPHER, USN, CTF-140
(3) Biography of RADM T. A. CHRISTOPHER, USN, CTF-140
(4) Navy Manned Spacecraft Recovery Narrative

1. Enclosures (1) through (4), forwarded in accordance with reference (a), summarize this command's operations during the period 1 January through 31 December 1967.

T. A. CHRISTOPHER

BASIC NARRATIVE

COMMAND HISTORY FOR MANNED SPACECRAFT
RECOVERY FORCE, ATLANTIC (TF-140) for 1967

1967 was a year of operational reviews and training for Manned Spacecraft Recovery Force, Atlantic. After an unfortunate fire that took the lives of three astronauts in January, the unmanned Apollo 4 (AS-501) mission was rescheduled for April, 1967 but was further delayed as a result of technical difficulties until finally launched on November 9, 1967.

On May 26, Rear Admiral Thomas A. Christopher relieved Rear Admiral W.C. Abhau, as Commander, Manned Spacecraft Recovery Force, Atlantic, (CTF-140).

On July 1, the command was designated a shore duty billet for assigned personnel.

In August construction of Recovery Control Center, Atlantic began in the headquarters of Commander Manned Spacecraft Recovery Force at NAS Norfolk, Virginia.

On November 2, Commander Task Force 140 and his operational staff deployed to Cape Kennedy, Florida, for the Apollo 4 launch. Recovery units for this first launch of the Saturn V launch vehicle included: USS AUSTIN (LPD-4); USS JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, Jr. (DD-850); USS HOIST (ARS-40); USS YORK COUNTY (LST-1175); and USS SABINE (AO-26), along with five helicopters of Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 11; six swimmers from Underwater Demolition Team 21 and an RA3B aircraft from Heavy Attack Photo Squadron 62. The launch was made on November 9 and the Command Module was recovered in the Pacific Recovery Area by the USS BENNINGTON (CVS-20)

REAR ADMIRAL THOMAS A. CHRISTOPHER, USN

Rear Admiral Thomas A. Christopher assumed duties as the Navy Deputy to DOD Manager for Manned Space Flight Support Operations, CNO Representative for Manned Space Flight Support Operations, and Commander Manned Spacecraft Recovery Force, Atlantic (CTF 140) on May 26, 1967.

He was born in [redacted] of [redacted]. He attended high school in Perth Amboy and the Cochran-Bryan Preparatory School, Annapolis, Maryland, before entering the U.S. Naval Academy on appointment from the Third Congressional District of New Jersey in 1929. He graduated and was commissioned Ensign on June 1, 1933.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy, he had two years duty in the cruiser Memphis and in June 1935, reported for flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida. He was designated Naval Aviator on June 12, 1936. While assigned to Scouting Squadron 11-S, his unit was embarked on the cruiser Indianapolis and participated in the good-will tour of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to South America in the Fall of 1936. In June 1938 he transferred to the aircraft carrier Langley for duty with Patrol Squadron 11 based at San Diego and participated in operations in Alaska, Panama Canal, Puerto Rico and Norfolk. In 1939 he was assigned to Patrol Squadron 4 (redesignated Patrol Squadron 22) based on Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii.

In May 1941 he joined Patrol Squadron 21 (at Pearl Harbor) and was stationed at the Advanced Base on Midway Island when that Island was attacked by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. His wife was living on Ford Island that fateful day and, as a nurse, joined the many others in rendering aid to the survivors of the attack. Patrol Squadron 21 was deployed to Perth, Australia in March 1942 where, with the remnants of Patrol Wing 10 evacuated from the Philippines and Patrol Squadron 22, it was reorganized as Patrol Squadron 101.

Between April and November 1942 he was Executive Officer of Headquarters Squadron 10, based in Perth, Australia, after which he commanded the seaplane tender Childs, supporting operations in the Java Sea and Indian Ocean. In September 1943 he reported as Operations Officer on the Staff of Deputy Commander Fleet Air Wing 10 and on 1 Nov. 1943 became Commanding Officer of Patrol Squadron 34, flying Catalina patrol seaplanes, dubbed "Black Cats". The squadron participated in night masthead bombing operations against Japanese shipping and installations and in search and rescue missions for the Fifth Air Force in the New Guinea and Bismarck Sea areas. He was awarded the Navy Cross and a Gold Star in lieu of a second Navy Cross and cited in part as follows:

NAVY CROSS

"For extraordinary heroism as Commander of a PBY-5 aircraft during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Bismarck Sea on the nights of December 31, 1943 and January 22, 1944. Operating in the

vicinity of strongly defended Japanese bases, Commander Christopher pressed home close range attacks, flying in at extremely low level and striking fiercely. Despite adverse weather conditions, enemy aircraft and heavy, accurate anti-aircraft fire which damaged his plane on both occasions, he succeeded in inflicting serious damage on two Japanese warships..."

GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF THE SECOND NAVY CROSS

"For extraordinary heroism as Commander of a flight of five PBY-5 planes during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Bismarck Sea area, January 15, 1944. Locating a large, strongly escorted enemy convoy, Commander Christopher pressed home a masthead attack at extremely close range, inflicting extensive damage on the enemy vessels. Braving intense heavy and light anti-aircraft fire, as well as enemy aerial opposition in the vicinity, he brought his flight in low over the convoy and personally destroyed one 6,800 ton merchantman while the remainder of his flight destroyed two more. By his bold tactics and daring leadership, he contributed immeasurably to the success of the mission and to the ultimate destruction of vital Japanese shipping in the area..."

He was awarded the Air Medal and Gold Star in Lieu of the Second and Third Air Medals for completing missions in the Pacific war area and is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of the Presidential Unit Citation awarded Patrol Squadron 34.

He was assigned to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), Navy Department, where he served in the Aviation Flight Division from June 1944 until September 1945 when he was ordered to fitting out duty in the escort aircraft carrier Palau and Executive Officer upon her commissioning. Detached from that carrier in October 1947, he next reported as Operations Officer at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California, where he remained until July 1950. He then reported to the Commander Fleet Air Wings, Pacific, at Whidbey Island and was assigned as Officer in Charge, Fleet Air Detachment, Seattle, Washington. In February 1951 he joined the aircraft carrier Princeton in the Far East as Executive Officer.

He received a Letter of Commendation with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon and Combat "V" from Commander Seventh Fleet "for meritorious achievement as the Executive Officer of the USS Princeton during sustained operations of that ship as flagship of Commander Carrier Division Five and Commander Task Force 77 against the enemy North Korean and Chinese Communist Forces from June 1 to August 15, 1951." He is also entitled to the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the Princeton.

He was head of the Distribution Detail Section, Aviation Personnel Division in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations from January 1952 until July 1954, after which he was a student at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. Completing the course there

in June 1955, he then joined the staff of the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic and in November 1957 assumed command of the attack aircraft carrier ESSEX. During his command of Essex, planes from his ship spearheaded the U.S. Peace Force Landings in Beirut, Lebanon, beginning July 15, 1958. In late August the ship was suddenly ordered to the Far East and after transiting the Suez Canal, the ship joined the U.S. Seventh Fleet off Formosa in September. Relieved there, Essex came home by way of Capetown, South Africa and arrived in Mayport, Florida, November 17. Under his command the warship steamed nearly 75,000 miles, or three times around the world at the equator. He was relieved at Mayport on November 18, 1958.

Admiral Christopher reported to Carrier Division 17 from duty as Director of Recruiting, Bureau of Naval Personnel. His selection for the rank of Rear Admiral was approved by the President in July 1961.

Under Rear Admiral Christopher's command, Carrier Division 17 with USS Hornet as flagship and nucleus of the Hunter Killer Group, underwent training and ready HUK Group Phases in the Pacific which culminated in deployment to the Western Pacific as the Ready HUK Group for that area. USS Snook (SSN 592) deployed from Pearl Harbor with the Group marking the first time a submarine so operated as a tactical unit of a surface force.

Admiral Christopher reported as Commander Naval Forces, Marianas on 7 December 1962. During this assignment he was responsible for the security of two and one half million square miles of the Pacific Ocean. In addition, he was Deputy Military Governor of the Bonin and Volcano Islands. He reported to Key West, Florida on December 19, 1964 and served as Commander Key West Force, Commander Naval Base, and Commander Fleet Air Key West, until assuming his present command.

In addition to the Navy Cross with Gold Star, the Air Medal with two Gold Stars, the Commendation Ribbon, the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Admiral Christopher has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp, the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four stars, the World War II Victory Medal, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, the Navy Occupation Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Lebanon and Formosa). He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

He is married to the former Miss (b) (6) of (b) (6) and they have five children: (b) (6) an Ensign in the U.S. Navy; (b) (6), a 4th year Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps midshipman at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis.; (b) (6) attending Immaculata Junior College in Washington, D.C.; (b) (6) and (b) (6).

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MANNED SPACECRAFT RECOVERY FORCE, ATLANTIC
(TASK FORCE 140)

Navy Manned Spacecraft Recovery

The critical importance and impressive extent of U.S. Navy support of America's Manned Space Flight program is best illustrated by the total of more than 200 individual ships, and numerous aircraft squadrons and underwater demolition teams employed to date in world-wide spacecraft recovery duties. These units were assigned to U.S. Navy Manned Spacecraft Recovery Forces, Task Force 140 in the Atlantic and Task Force 130 in the Pacific.

Recovery ships are required on station prior to each mission and remain on station until spacecraft splashdown unless an earlier release ~~in~~ is warranted. Although recovery of manned flights receives the most publicity, Navy forces also have primary recovery responsibility for ~~the~~ numerous unmanned spacecraft launches which provide ~~the~~ essential scientific data prerequisite to attainment of America's space goals. Safety of spacecraft personnel being of prime importance, manned spacecraft recovery is an exacting and demanding evolution which requires well equipped and trained crews.

Rear Admiral Thomas A. Christopher, USN, as Commander, Manned Spacecraft Recovery Force, Atlantic (Commander, Task Force 140), is responsible for the coordination, training and control of ships and units assigned for each mission by Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

A period of indoctrination and equipment installation, familiarization and training in spacecraft recovery is provided after the units have been designated. The indoctrination and training required varies with each unit since

they may be veterans of previous missions. As an example, two of the Atlantic Fleet ships assigned for the Gemini 12 mission were on their first recovery assignment while the USS WASP (CVS-18) was on her fifth recovery mission.

This Atlantic Task Force is an important part of the world-wide Department of Defense Manned Space Flight Recovery Organization. Directing all elements of this multi-service recovery team is the DOD Manager, General Huston, who sits next to the NASA Mission Director in Mission Control Center during the period of each space flight. Throughout the mission General Huston maintains direct communication with all recovery forces and, working in concert with the Mission Director, directs forces as required to effect timely recovery of the capsule.

Preparatory to each such space mission the DOD recovery forces assume designated area readiness stations. With responsibility for coordination of Atlantic Command area recovery operations as directed by DOD Manager, Admiral Christopher and his staff of 20 officers and 41 enlisted men guide operations from a newly constructed Recovery Control Center, Atlantic at the Naval Air Station, Norfolk. Staff members also deploy aboard recovery ships when necessary. During the pre-launch and mission flight period staff personnel maintain 24-hour surveillance of the position and readiness status of all recovery forces, the spacecraft mission progress and weather conditions in the primary and contingency recovery areas. Direct communications maintained with all assigned Atlantic recovery units and the DOD Manager at Mission Control at Houston, Texas enable Admiral Christopher to immediately and effectively react to recovery requirements.

The initial stations occupied by recovery ships are located along the ground track which the spacecraft will follow between lift-off and orbital insertion. The stations are changed as necessary during subsequent orbits to keep the ships in the best position for spacecraft and astronaut recovery. The re-entry and splashdown accuracy obtained in the last Gemini and the recent Apollo 4 flight permitted the release of some recovery ships after spacecraft orbital insertion.

Spacecraft and astronaut recoveries have been accomplished by individual ships or a combination of UDT swimmers-aircraft-ship. In the past some astronauts have left the spacecraft and ridden a helicopter to the recovery ship while others have remained in the spacecraft until it was hoisted aboard the recovery ship.

Recovery force operations continue even after delivery of the astronauts to their base. The spacecraft is delivered to a point designated by NASA officials and recovery equipment is returned and repositioned in preparation for the next mission. At times the tempo of our space efforts has resulted in recovery forces being deployed in support of simultaneous missions.

The success of our space program is directly related to the Navy's outstanding efficiency in astronaut and spacecraft recovery. This capability in recovery procedures is well established through exacting attention to requirements and has resulted in a continuing record of successful recoveries. Naval forces will continue to provide this same professional level of support for forthcoming APOLLO missions.

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In addition to a possible command module recovery due to mission abort, the AUSTIN, with her assigned helicopters and underwater swimmers, was assigned the tasks of retrieving two camera cassettes and any pieces of the burned-out first stage rocket booster surviving ocean impact. The camera cassettes were ejected from the Saturn V vehicle shortly after photographing the separation of the first stage rocket booster from the second. Both camera cassettes were recovered intact and several fragments of the booster were successfully retrieved for NASA engineers to evaluate.

Immediately after completion of the Apollo 4 flight, the Recovery Control Center at Cape Kennedy, Florida was deactivated and installed equipment removed to Norfolk for installation in Recovery Control Center, Atlantic. The new Recovery Center will be commissioned in early 1968. In the future, all space flight recovery operations scheduled for the Atlantic Command Area will be directed from Norfolk.

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